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## Sermon

### ***The Guarantee of the Spirit***

**Acts 2:1-21; Romans 8:22-27; John 15:26-27, 16:4a-15**

Pentecost, 24/5/15

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Today, we celebrate Pentecost. It was one of the great feasts when every Jewish man was commanded to attend in Jerusalem. They understood the feast represented the Giving of the Law, and God used this day, in the presence of this assembly in Jerusalem to pour out his Spirit on the fledging Church.

#### **First Fruits**

Jesus had died at the time of the Passover – fulfilling the meaning of the Passover lamb. He had risen to life again at the Feast of First Fruits. That feast celebrated the first evidence of the harvest. Those first heads of grain were the promise of the main harvest to follow. So the New Testament refers to Jesus being the first-fruit of the resurrection<sup>1</sup>. He is the first to have a resurrection body. The first fruit is the promise of the harvest to follow. The harvest to follow is the General Resurrection of all faithful people to their resurrection bodies. We will have bodies like his resurrection body.

#### **Ascension**

Jesus continued to meet with the disciples over a period of 40 days and then ascended to the Father's side. He said that he would send the promise of the Father.

#### **Pentecost**

Ten days after the Ascension, fifty days after the resurrection, the Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples – the promise of the Father has come.

Moses longed for it centuries earlier. When the seventy elders were given the Spirit when he exclaimed, "I wish that all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put his Spirit on them!"<sup>2</sup> It is what Joel foresaw when he described God's Spirit being poured out on all flesh: on men and women, young and old, slave and free. They would prophesy, see visions and dream dreams.

The 120 disciples were gathered for a prayer meeting in the morning when there was the sound of a great wind in the room. The wind was a manifestation, a showing, of the Spirit.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:20

<sup>2</sup> Numbers 11:29

I have twice experienced a wind that as far as I could tell must have been the Holy Spirit. When I was a new Christian I visited St Peter's Pakuranga twice a week for a couple of years to get good teaching. Don Battley was vicar and there was a strong move of the Holy Spirit. I remember an evening service inside when, as we were praying or singing, there was a sudden, strong breeze which we all felt although the doors and windows were shut. On another occasion, someone arrived late at the meeting and said, he had seen a glowing light above the church as we worshipped inside.

Years later, I and another man were ministering to a man who needed deliverance. We heard his story, then turned to prayer. When I prayed, "Come, Holy Spirit," I felt a distinct wind on my right cheek, and the man who was on my left, grunted and said, "It's gone." And it had – the Holy Spirit had blown on him and set him free. Praise the Lord!

Then they saw tongues of fire over each other's' heads. I used to wonder what this Holy Spirit fire would look like. Then it occurred to me it would be like the fire of the burning bush, where Yahweh spoke to Moses. It looked like fire but the bush was not burnt up. I have read an account of a revival in a girls' boarding schools in India. A girl woke and saw her roommate in bed with flames over her. She ran to get the fire bucket and tipped the water over her friend to put out the flames. What does Holy Spirit fire look like? Like ordinary fire.

### **And Today?**

So the Holy Spirit came in an obvious way on those first Christians, what about us?

We cannot be Christians without the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who leads us to Christ. It is he, who shows us our need of forgiveness and ministers that to us. It is he who enables us and empowers us. Paul says in Romans 8:9b "If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ." So if you are a Christian you have the Spirit of Christ – it is not possible otherwise.

At the same time, it is the Holy Spirit who convinces us that we are saved – Romans 8:16, "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children."

The Spirit brought boldness to the disciples: Peter stood up and preached in front of thousands where he had recently been hiding in a locked room for fear of the authorities. The Spirit brought supernatural abilities to the disciples – here empowering them to speak in languages they had not learned.

The Spirit is the member of the Trinity who directly deals with us. Jesus is at the right hand of the Father; it is the Holy Spirit who comes to us, ministers to us, makes Jesus known to us, who shows us the mind of Christ.

Torben had an experience recently where the Holy Spirit made a practical difference to his work. He is a food technologist and was stuck with a technical problem with a client's recipe. Five year's work had gone into bringing a new product to market. Production had started and a week later, it was found that the baked product was cracking and could not be sold.

Torben and I had been in a subcommittee and he said he had to go and work all night to solve this problem. I suggested we pray. In my mind a picture appeared of a butterfly nut and then the thought, "It's easy." It didn't mean anything to me, but it was clear so I told it to Torben. He responded, "Maybe it's to do with the butter. That would have been the last thing I would have adjusted."

He emailed me a few days later:

Thank you for your prayers and sharing your impression of the butterfly nut.

I worked on through Wednesday and Friday, changing the procedure for adding butter to the baking recipe. The outcome has been amazing, and we now have three products that meet the standards set for export. The procedure also opens the way for additional improvements to be made.

The procedure is so good I intend to apply it to the other products the company produces by the traditional method, anticipating an improvement in quality for these products as well.

Praise to God for his practical insight and wisdom!

While it is only by the Holy Spirit that we come to Christ, we can also have real experiences of him within us and these are important. Some people want to discount them but Paul did not.

## Guarantee of our Inheritance

I almost swapped from the Romans reading to Ephesians because I wanted to emphasise a point. In Ephesians 1:13-14, Paul writes what we heard in the sentence for today.

Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance.

The experience they had on the Day of Pentecost was a deposit of the full inheritance the wonder of heaven which they would receive.

When you buy a house, you have to pay a deposit. It shows you are committed. You have started a transaction which will be completed later. The word here can be translated “earnest” or “guarantee.” An earnest is a thing regarded as a sign or promise of what is to come. In commercial transactions, an earnest is a sample of what will be supplied.

But it was not just those 120 - Paul here writes to later Christians saying the experience of the Spirit is a down-payment on heaven, it gives a foretaste of our inheritance. That applies just as much to us today.

The Greek word for this is *arrabōn*. Remember, it meant pledge, guarantee, earnest. In modern Greek it is used for engagement ring – which is given as a pledge of the intent to marry. While it was not used that way in Paul’s time, I think he would approve of the simile that as a man gives a woman a ring as they agree to marry, so Christ gives the Holy Spirit to the Church who is to be his bride.

Church, the awareness of the Holy Spirit in our lives is important for us today. It is important as a promise and a foretaste of our inheritance; it is important since he empowers us to walk with Jesus and to exercise the responsibilities he gives us.

I said, I nearly changed the reading from Romans to Ephesians. So why didn’t I? When I looked at the Romans passage I discovered the same idea is there although slightly hidden.

“... we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.”<sup>3</sup>

The firstfruits of the Spirit – it is the Hebrew equivalent of the Greek *arrabon*. Again Paul is showing that this gift of the Spirit into our lives is the foretaste of what is to come – the full adoption and redemption which will be fulfilled at the resurrection.

Again in the Romans passage we come back to the enabling of the Spirit. We are weak but he gives us strength; we do not even know how to pray but he prays for us to the Father.

We are a church which believes in the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit. We expect him to be at work in our lives.

That is what our logo represents. A ship is an ancient image of the church. This ship is being powered by the wind with a full sail - there is movement. We need to catch the wind of the Spirit and be empowered by him. The mast is the cross – without the cross of Christ we are lost. It is the mast that holds up the sail. We need structure as well as power and inspiration. We can only come before the Father because of the cross of Christ. We can only receive the Spirit because of the redemption Christ has won for us there.



The Vision statement ties into the same ideas. It is on the KITsheet each week: “Growing in faith, love and mission.”

The nature of life is to grow and so too the Kingdom of God grows. We are to be a growing Church. We are moving.

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<sup>3</sup> Romans 8:23

We are growing in faith, love and mission. These are the relationships with God, with each other and with those outside the church. We seek to grow in our faith – our knowledge, trust and obedience to God.

We seek to grow in love expressed in fellowship with and care for each other and service beyond the fellowship.

We seek to grow in mission as we tell others what Jesus has done for us. Those will be people nearby and people far away.

We can only do any of this as we are enabled by the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of Jesus – the Holy Spirit.

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